

18. Social

The Social Impact Assessment (SIA) examined the existing social and community conditions in the vicinity of the Project and the potential impacts that the Project could have on individuals and communities.

The SIA identified that the community within the study area is a highly connected community with strong social linkages. Community attitudes towards the Project were mixed with concerns raised about potential amenity impacts, including an increase in noise levels and impacts on visual amenity. Concerns were also raised about potential property acquisition, severance of agricultural land and changes in access arrangements to local properties. Buangor Primary School raised particular concerns about amenity impacts that the Project could have on the school and potential changes to school bus routes.

Community members also identified that they thought by-passing Buangor could benefit their community by increasing the amenity of the town and that the Project could result in higher levels of safety, particularly with regard to accessing properties.

The Project would not negatively affect access to any major community facilities or any tourism attractors, but may in fact encourage people to visit local towns and community services and facilities more frequently due to improved safety and travel times.

The risk and impact assessment identified that the key social impacts from the Project would be:

- The dislocation of some individuals as the Project would require acquisition of two dwellings in Option 1 and three dwellings in Option 2.
- Changes in property access arrangements and a slight increase in travel times for some individuals due to restrictions on some local road and property access, although these impacts are expected to be offset by an increase in safety for these individuals;
- Amenity impacts including increased noise levels for some individuals during construction and operation and changes to visual amenity for some individuals. The social impact of this is expected to be medium due to the large number of households that would experience a slight change in amenity.

Overall, the social impacts of the Project are considered to be low. However, for some impact pathways including amenity during construction and operation and the acquisition of dwellings, there is still a residual risk rating of medium. The SIA identified that most community members are tolerant of short-term amenity impacts from construction as they would ultimately benefit from the Project. VicRoads would compensate owners of property that is acquired in accordance with the *Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986*.

18.1 EES Objectives

The EES objectives relevant to the Social Impact Assessment are:

- *To protect residents' well-being and minimise any dislocation of residents or severance of communities, to the extent practicable.*

This chapter discusses the potential social effects of the Project, particularly on nearby residents and surrounding communities. It includes an assessment of the following factors specified in the EES Scoping Requirements:

- The existing social and community conditions in the vicinity of the Project and relevant alternatives, including the settlement pattern, the distribution of residents in the vicinity of the site, and their demographic characteristics, and patterns of community interaction and social foci
- Potential effects on local residents and communities during the construction stage
- Potential effects on places with particular cultural, recreational or aesthetic values, particularly with regard to significant regional locations
- The potential for residents and communities, or parts of communities in the vicinity of the Project, to be affected through dislocation, severance of accessibility or reduction of their amenity (in relation to visual amenity, noise other changes to the character of the area) resulting from development of the proposed Project or relevant alternatives
- Proposed measures to address potential adverse social effects, and having regard to these, the likely residual effects on local residents and communities.

The EES also needs to identify native title interests and briefly outline the process by which these interests are being addressed in light of the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*.

This chapter is based on a Social Impact Assessment report completed by GHD Pty Ltd (2012h), which is included in Technical Appendix O.

18.2 Study Area

A study area has been defined for the purpose of the Social Impact Assessment which is different to the Project area. This is because the community of the study area extends well beyond the Western Highway. It includes all of the people that live in proximity to the Western Highway but also people that live on the roads running off the Western Highway and who rely on it for access.

For the purpose of the Social Impact Assessment, the study area includes the populations in the surrounding areas which may be affected by the Project. These are defined as per the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census Collection Districts (CCDs) which intersect or border the Western Highway (see Figure 18-1).

The Local Government Areas which encompass the study area are:

- Shire of Pyrenees
- Rural City of Ararat

The Project does not include consideration of bypassing Beaufort and Ararat. For this study, it is assumed that these towns are not bypassed.

18.3 Methodology

The methodology for the Social Impact Assessment included the following activities:

- Reviewing the records of previous consultation activities undertaken by VicRoads.
- Developing a list of key stakeholders for interview, based on the review of the previous consultation.

- A review of local and State government social and planning policy relevant to the study area.
- Identifying any strategic development objectives which should be considered in the options assessment process.
- An analysis of the social profile of the study area, which included a review of Census data and Council information (comparable 2011 data was not available for review).
- A review of community services and facilities.
- A review of cultural and social values based on the records from the previous research and existing information on the community of the study area (for example from Council reports and policies).
- Stakeholder meetings with Council officers, local community groups, and residents.
- Participation in consultation activities, including landowner consultation sessions and working with the VicRoads community engagement team to develop feedback forms.

A detailed description of the assessment methodology is included in Technical Appendix O.

18.4 Legislation and Policy

The legislation and government policies relevant to the Social Impact Assessment are discussed in Table 18-1.

Table 18-1 Relevant social legislation and government policies

Legislation/Policy	Description
National	
<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>	This Act notes the principles of ecologically sustainable development which should be applied in all project assessments. Section 136 of the Act also states that the Minister must consider economic and social matters in deciding whether or not to approve the taking of an action requiring assessment and approval under the Act, and what conditions to attach to an approval.
<i>Native Title Act 1993</i>	Amongst other objectives this Act exists for the recognition and protection of native title. In formalising the <i>Native Title Act 1993</i> the High Court: (a) rejected the doctrine that Australia was terra nullius (land belonging to no-one) at the time of European settlement; (b) held that the common law of Australia recognises a form of native title that reflects the entitlement of the indigenous inhabitants of Australia, in accordance with their laws and customs, to their traditional lands; and (c) held that native title is extinguished by valid government acts that are inconsistent with the continued existence of native title rights and interests, such as the grant of freehold or leasehold estates ('Preamble', <i>Native Title Act 1993</i>).
State	
<i>Transport Integration Act 2010</i>	This Act highlights the need for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Social and economic inclusion (Section 8) ■ Economic prosperity (Section 9) ■ Integration of transport and land use (Section 11) ■ Safety and health and wellbeing (Section 13).
<i>Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008</i>	This Act recognises the State's role in promoting, protecting and reducing inequalities in

Legislation/Policy	Description
	<p>public health and wellbeing. It promotes collaboration between all levels of Government and industry, business, communities and individuals.</p> <p>The following objectives in the <i>Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008</i> (Part 2, Section 4) need to be considered in the social impact assessment of the Project:</p> <p>Part 2, Section 4 Objective</p> <p>(1) The Parliament recognises that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the State has a significant role in promoting and protecting the public health and wellbeing of persons in Victoria public health and wellbeing includes the absence of disease, illness, injury, disability or premature death and the collective state of public health and wellbeing public health interventions are one of the ways in which the public health and wellbeing can be improved and inequalities reduced where appropriate, the State has a role in assisting in responses to public health concerns of national and international significance. <p>(2) In the context of subsection (1), the objective of this Act is to achieve the highest attainable standard of public health and wellbeing by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> protecting public health and preventing disease, illness, injury, disability or premature death promoting conditions in which persons can be healthy reducing inequalities in the state of public health and wellbeing. <p>The Act also defines the following principle:</p> <p>Part 2, Section 7 Principle of primacy of prevention</p> <p>(1) The prevention of disease, illness, injury, disability or premature death is preferable to remedial measures.</p> <p>Part 2, Section 10 Principle of collaboration</p> <p>(1) Public health and wellbeing, in Victoria and at a national and international level, can be enhanced through collaboration between all levels of Government and industry, business, communities and individuals.</p>
<i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i>	<p>This Act has the objective of securing 'a pleasant, efficient and safe working, living and recreational environment for all Victorians and visitors to Victoria'. It also addresses the protection of public utilities for the benefit of the community.</p>
<i>Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010</i>	<p>The purposes of the <i>Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010</i> are to advance reconciliation and promote good relations between the State and traditional owners and to recognise traditional owner groups based on their traditional and cultural associations to certain land in Victoria. This includes recognising traditional owner rights and conferring rights on traditional owner groups as to access to or ownership or management of certain public land, as well as decision making rights and other rights that may be exercised in relation to the use and development of the land or natural resources on the land. Traditional owner groups are represented within the study area.</p>
Central Highlands Regional Strategic Plan	<p>The Central Highlands Regional Strategic Plan is the key overarching regional policy for the two municipalities covering the study area.</p> <p>The Strategic Plan considers that the planned upgrade of the Western Highway would strengthen the region's comparative advantage against other regions in the State, as it would strengthen links with the rapidly growing western region of Melbourne.</p> <p>The Project can contribute to the overall goals of the Plan by minimising impacts on agricultural productivity, improving transport access for residents and businesses, enhancing the experiences of tourists and making the Western Highway safer for all road users.</p>
State Planning Policy Framework (SPPF) Ararat & Pyrenees Planning Schemes	<p>The SPPF is the planning policy which underpins all land use planning in Victoria. It consists of a series of clauses which set out specific policies for specific areas of planning. The relevant planning schemes for the Project are those for the Rural City of Ararat and the Shire of Pyrenees. The following clauses from the framework are relevant in determining the appropriate social objectives for the Project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clause 10 Operation of the State Planning Policy Framework Clause 11 Settlement Clause 16 Housing Clause 18 Transport Clause 19 Infrastructure
Local	
Rural City of Ararat Council Plan 2009-2013	<p>This Council Plan sets the direction for Council for the current time period. The plan sets out a series of strategic directions for the community which are built on four pillars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our People Our Culture Our Economy Our Environment.
Rural City of Ararat, Municipal Public	<p>Further objectives around access to transport are set out in the Municipal Public Health and Well-being Plan (MPHWP) dated 2009-2013. The over-arching objective is to</p>

Legislation/Policy	Description
Health and Well-being Plan 2009-2013	<p>improve social connectedness. The Plan notes that people are most commonly connected to family, schools, work and different types of community groups, clubs and organisations. Social inclusion is a key determinant of mental health and wellbeing. Transport connections and accessibility play an important role in developing and maintaining social connections. This issue is therefore important to assess in a Social Impact Assessment.</p> <p>The transport-related objectives in the MPHWP are focussed on public transport. They are to achieve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased usage and utilisation of public transport Improved public transport services for the municipality. <p>As the Western Highway is a major public transport route, this objective is directly relevant to the current Project.</p>
Pyrenees Council Plan 2009-2013	<p>The 2009-2013 Council Plan describes the goals and aspirations of the Council, specifically what the Council believes is important to the residents of the Pyrenees Shire, and what it hopes to achieve in the near future.</p> <p>The plan states that the Council proposes to focus on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Road infrastructure Community infrastructure Community wellbeing Growth and employment development Governance and community leadership Organisational development The environment.
Pyrenees Shire, Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2009	<p>The Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan (2009) includes several key points about the characteristics of the Pyrenees Shire community, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Pyrenees has a SEIFA (Socio Economic Index for Areas) of 944, which ranks it as number 5 in level of disadvantage among the 79 municipalities in Victoria</i> <i>There is a relatively low level of workforce participation amongst adults. This may be due to a higher proportion of persons aged 55 years and over.</i> <i>The level of post-secondary education is relatively low compared with the State average.</i> <i>A quarter of all residents in the Shire have reported experiencing transport limitations, compared with the Victorian average of a fifth.</i> <i>There is a relatively low level of crimes against the person in the Pyrenees Shire.</i> <i>Mobile telephone and broadband internet connections are below the standard of metropolitan equivalents.</i> <p>The transport related objective is Road Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain a safe and effective road system that caters for all road users within the shire.



Off the Beaten Track Wine & Art Gallery, Buangor

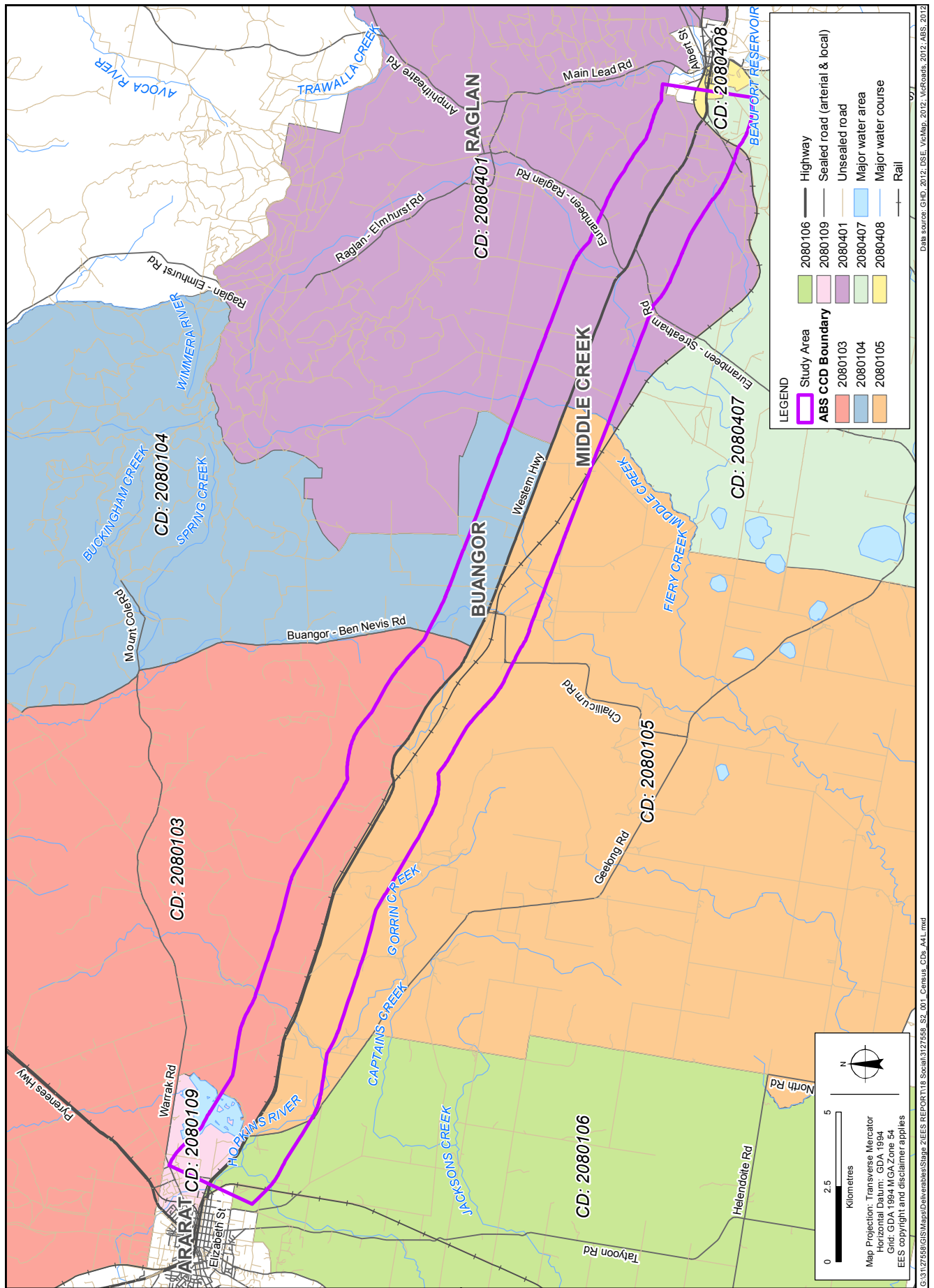


Figure 18-1 Census Collection District Boundaries

18.5 Existing Conditions

The existing conditions assessment includes all of the communities within both Section 2 (Beaufort to Ararat) and Section 3 (Ararat to Stawell) of the Western Highway Project (i.e. between Beaufort and Stawell). This is because there is significant overlap between the areas in terms of social function. It is likely that members of the community within Section 2 visit parts of Section 3, and vice versa.

18.5.1 Local Communities

The only township within Section 2 of the Western Highway Project area is the township of Buangor. The balance of the study area passes through agricultural land. However, the study area starts on the outskirts of Beaufort and ends on the outskirts of Ararat, and so both of these townships have been considered in the Social Impact Assessment.

18.5.1.1 Buangor

Buangor is located on the Western Highway near Billy Billy Creek, midway between Beaufort and Ararat. It is part of the Rural City of Ararat.

Community facilities:

- A Primary School (see Figure 18-2) with an enrolment of 15 students in 2012 (GHD, 2012h). The school draws its catchment from Ballyrogen, Middle Creek, Raglan, Ferntree Falls, Warrak and Buangor.
- Shebas Hotel (now closed)
- Off The Beaten Track Wine & Art Gallery.
- V-Line Bus Stop.
- A community sports precinct, home of the historic Cobb and Co. Staging Stable (see Figure 18-3), now used for functions and gatherings, a sports pavilion, tennis courts and the recently upgraded sports oval, which was constructed on land donated by a local landowner.



Figure 18-2 Buangor Primary School

According to the Buangor Community Action Plan, there are approximately 40 houses within the township of Buangor and a further 178 properties in the surrounding area. The economy of the region around Buangor is dominated by farming industries, including wool, cattle, cropping, hay and vineyards.

Places of local social value:

- Buangor Avenue of Honour, along Western Highway through the town (commemorates the fallen of World War 1).
- Former Cobb and Co. Staging Stables (now community centre).
- Challicum Hills Wind Farm.
- Vineyards - cellar door sales.
- Mount Cole State Forest.
- Mount Buangor State Park.
- Langi Ghiran State Park.
- Woodnaggerak Homestead (east of Buangor on the Western Highway). This site is highly valued by many members of the local community. While it is not formally heritage-listed, it is seen to be a site of local social significance.



Figure 18-3 Rear of the Former Cobb and Co. Staging Stables and community facilities

18.5.1.2 Beaufort

Beaufort is the principal town in the Pyrenees Shire and had a population of 1,044 in 2006 (ABS Census). The town's highway location is seen to have been an important factor in the development of the town and for future employment prospects. Beaufort is considered to be an established rural service centre which offers a wide range of services and facilities to both local residents and to the surrounding rural population. Facilities include a supermarket, chemist, newsagency and various retail stores, food services outlets and hotels. It is also seen as a service base for local and regional industry.

Community facilities:

- Beaufort Primary School, which has an enrolment of approximately 140 students
- Beaufort and Skipton Health Service. The Beaufort Campus, located just off the Western Highway on Havelock Street, provides:
 - Ten acute beds, 15 nursing home beds, 12 hostel beds and an emergency department;
 - A full-time GP clinic and a full range of Allied Health services; and
 - District Nursing, Meals on Wheels and Social Work services (GHD, 2011h).

Places of local social value:

- Beaufort Band Rotunda.
- Beaufort Heritage Walk.
- Beaufort Lake (including camping facilities and a caravan park).
- Mount Cole State Forest.
- Ripon War Memorial and Park.
- Sporting facilities: 18-hole golf course, bowling greens, tennis and squash courts, cricket and football ovals, basketball and netball courts and a public swimming pool.

18.5.1.3 Ararat

Ararat is the administrative centre of the municipality of the Rural City of Ararat. In 2006 the population was 7,169 (ABS Census). Ararat is a major regional service centre for higher level services such as health and education.

Community facilities:

- Primary schools: Ararat Primary; Ararat West Primary; Ararat North Primary and St Mary's Catholic Primary School.
- Secondary schools: Ararat Community College and Marian College (Catholic high school).
- Regional campuses of the University of Ballarat and Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE.
- Ararat & District Hospital, which provides in-patient and acute hospital services, allied health services and aged care residential services.
- Ararat Medical Centre, which provides general practice medical services to the Ararat community.
- Prison (major employment and community facility).

Places of local and regional social value:

- Ararat Regional Art Gallery and the Ararat Performing Arts Centre, both housed in the former Town Hall.
- The Gum San Chinese Heritage Centre, which is focussed on the history of immigrant miners on the goldfields in the mid-1800s.

- Former Aradale Mental Hospital (now a TAFE campus), but also open for guided tours.
- The J Ward Museum, which explains the early history of the goldfield times and the incarceration of the criminally insane. The Museum is visited by approximately 10,000 people per annum.
- Green Hill Lake located adjacent to the study area on the eastern outskirts of Ararat. Green Hill Lake is a popular recreational attraction for the local community and it has extensive camping and caravanning facilities, making it a destination for travellers.
- Langi Ghiran State Park is located within the study area within the boundary of the Ararat municipality and is managed by Parks Victoria.

18.5.2 Demographic Analysis

A demographic analysis was undertaken of the 2006 Census at the CCD level, and includes those CCDs that encompass the study area (see Figure 18-1).

The demographic analysis indicates that the community of the study area is culturally homogenous in terms of cultural background. The age profile is slightly older than average across the municipalities, but in general the residents of the rural areas are not significantly different in character to the urban communities of the municipalities. There is no planning or demographic impetus for the area between Beaufort and Ararat to become more heavily settled.

The population in the study area is stable. In most areas, around two-thirds of the population have lived at the same address for more than five years. This indicates a highly connected community with strong social linkages.

The Social Impact Assessment in Technical Appendix O provides a more detailed description of the population and labour force characteristics.

18.5.3 Native Title Status

As in Table 18-1, the *Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993* (NT Act) exists for the recognition and protection of native title. Native title may exist on land if a traditional connection has been maintained with an area where it has not been extinguished by an act of the Crown, for example on land such as:

- Unallocated Crown Land
- National parks
- Public reserves
- Some types of pastoral leases
- Land held by government agencies.

Section 227 of the NT Act states that: 'an act affects native title if it extinguishes native title rights and interests, or if it is otherwise wholly or partly inconsistent with their continued existence, enjoyment or exercise.' The NT Act distinguishes

between three types of acts which affect Native Title:

- Past acts
- Intermediate acts
- Future acts.

The occurrence of past or intermediate acts is likely to be relevant to the Project, in terms of whether or not native title has been extinguished within the Project area. Certain valid past acts extinguish Native Title if they occurred before 23 December 1996, including (refer Section 23B of NT Act):

- A grant of private land
- Leasehold giving exclusive possession
- Some public works
- Valid legislative acts.

There are also aspects of the Project which may comprise a 'future act' affecting native title, as alignment Options 1 and 2 traverse a range of land tenures, including Crown Land reserves and other forms of title, on which Native Title may not have been extinguished.

The future act provisions in the NT Act provide a way for development to proceed on land while protecting native title rights. In particular, the provisions set out in Part 2 Division 3 of the NT Act outline procedures that must be followed when governments or private stakeholders propose an activity on land that may affect native title.

A future act would be valid:

- If the act is covered by an Indigenous Land Use Agreement, or it falls into one of the prescribed future acts within Division 3 of the NT Act; and
- If the procedural requirements for that prescribed future act are fully complied with.

The construction of the Western Highway is likely to be defined a valid 'future act' under Section 24KA of the NT Act and to be considered a facility for services to the public. If the construction is defined this way, Subsections 7 and 7(b) of the NT Act state that 'The native title holders, and any registered native title claimants in relation to land or waters in the area concerned, have the same procedural rights as they would have in relation to the act on the assumption that they instead held:...(b)...ordinary title.' In other words, native title holders have the same procedural rights as ordinary title holders.

Any new road gazettal for the purpose of the Project is likely to extinguish native title and therefore could have compensation implications.

The Victorian *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (TOS Act) provides for an out-of-court settlement of native title and is an alternative native title settlement framework to the NT Act. When entering a settlement agreement under the TOS Act, a traditional owner group entity agrees to withdraw

any Native Title claim the group has and to not make a claim into the future. At this stage, a recognition and settlement agreement has not been entered into with any traditional owner group within the Project area.

Once the final alignment has been adopted, a detailed native title identification and analysis would be required, including investigation of the full tenure history of each parcel of land which is to be affected by the Project.

In addition, the NT Act stipulates that registered native title claimants have the right to be notified of a proposed development that comprises a 'future act'. According to a search of the National Native Title Tribunal record conducted on 28 October 2011, it appears that no native title claim has been lodged for the study area. In this case, Native Title Services Victoria should instead be notified, as this is the native title claimant body. A registered Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) does exist ('Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk Area Agreement'), involving Ararat Rural City Council and Pyrenees Shire Council, amongst other Local Government Authorities (refer Native Title Report in Technical Appendix J).

In order to meet its obligations under the NT Act 'future act' provisions and for the act to be considered valid, VicRoads must:

- Notify the claimants or representative body (stipulating that comments should be made within 28 days)
- Receive comments within 28 days to which it responds
- Notify claimants or the representative body of a final decision regarding those comments.

Further research is required to confirm whether there are recognised Native Title holders or claimants or an ILUA within the study area.



18.6 Community Attitudes and Values

Information on community attitudes toward the Project was collected in a number of ways, including:

- Review of correspondence between VicRoads and local landowners and other stakeholders.
- Review of feedback forms from the two rounds of community information sessions conducted during the course of the EES studies.
- Participation in VicRoads community information sessions.
- Interviews with a sample of affected landowners.
- Interviews with local government representatives.

Community attitudes have been summarised below, under four sub-headings.

18.6.1 Bypass of Buangor

Some respondents noted that bypassing Buangor could provide amenity benefits for the town, depending upon the final design. Alignment options to the south of Buangor were disliked by the local community. Respondents felt that the southern options would have a greater severance impact on the community of Buangor, which extends to the south of the actual township. They also felt that it would have a greater impact on the serenity of the community. It was noted that access to the community facilities would also be affected if the highway was realigned to the south of the town. Options to the north of the town generally had greater community support.

Representatives of Mount Cole Wineworks noted that bypassing the town may affect access to the Off The Beaten Track Wine & Art Gallery, their cellar door sales, which is located in Buangor. It was also noted that the wine and art gallery at Buangor could be seen as the start of the Grampians Wine Region, and that losing access to it could affect the tourist experience.

18.6.2 Cultural, recreational and aesthetic values

Several respondents noted that the area has high landscape values, with spectacular views across to the mountains. Woodnaggerak Homestead is considered to have significance for the local community because it is a surviving homestead from a community which used to have a primary school and church, which some local people attended as children.

There are several historic bridges and culverts in the region, such as a bluestone crossing on Dip Road, which local residents believe should be protected.

Several respondents noted the social and environmental values of Buangor. Residents of the town consider it to be a sanctuary where they can

enjoy an undisturbed rural lifestyle. They noted the importance of the mature red gum trees and other native flora.

18.6.3 Buangor Primary School

The Buangor Primary School community raised concerns regarding the impacts of some options on the amenity of the school environment, particularly with regard to traffic and noise.

The school community values the views from the school out to bushland and they were keen to preserve these. In correspondence, the School Council Secretary noted that the school community did not want the new Western Highway alignment to be too close to the school. They raised concerns regarding the safety of children attending the school if they have a major road only metres away. In addition, the school community are keen to see the visual impact from the school reduced as much as possible, either through siting or through landscaping mitigation.

Issues to consider in planning for the construction period include:

- Maintaining school bus routes, which traverse some of the rural roads which may be affected by construction activities - this would be included in the Project Traffic Management Plan.
- Managing the curiosity of the school children so that they are not tempted to 'visit' the construction site. This could be achieved by VicRoads and the construction company engaging with the school community and providing educational opportunities for the children to learn about the major construction project.

18.6.4 Dislocation, accessibility and residential amenity

Current conditions on the highway are considered unsafe by some respondents, particularly with regard to turning into properties or side roads from the highway. It was also noted that some bridges are not wide enough and can be unsafe when passed by oversized loads. The opportunity to widen or duplicate bridges to improve safety was noted by several respondents.

Several respondents noted that there was high amenity at their dwellings, including low noise levels and high landscape values. Where alignment options deviated from the current road, residents raised concerns regarding negative impacts on their amenity. Various correspondents discussed the relative merits of retaining trees and bushland or protecting houses from noise, and they generally placed greater weight on preventing noise levels from increasing near houses.

Issues were raised regarding farming operations including the impact of property acquisition; effects on moving stock and machinery around the district; impact on business succession planning; impact on planned sales and lease arrangements; and how

infrastructure such as dams and fences would be reinstated. Farmers were also concerned about land severance and how this may affect their operations and land value. Generally, they were accepting of alignments which required use and development of a strip of land at the front of properties but not of alignments which cut through paddocks and severed parcels of land.

18.7 Impact Assessment

The Social Impact Assessment was conducted under four main categories which included relevant indicators to measure the potential impact. The four categories were:

- Current Social and Community Conditions
- Individual and Community Impacts
- Construction Stage Impacts
- Valued Places and Spaces.

The social impact and benefits for each category are discussed below. For more detail refer to Section 6 of Technical Appendix O.

18.7.1 Current and social community conditions

18.7.1.1 Pressures on settlement patterns

There is a risk that some rural properties may be severed to a size that is smaller than 40 hectares (the minimum area for which no planning permit is required for a dwelling in the Farming Zone), which would mean the owners may not obtain a planning approval to build a house. This risk has also been assessed in the Planning and Land Use Impact Assessment Report (Technical Appendix C). The recommended control is to consolidate small parcels of land with adjacent larger farms. This could lead to slightly higher population density near the Western Highway. The number of parcels of land likely to be affected by severance in this way is 13 for Option 1 and 11 for Option 2.

The likelihood of the Project leading to an adverse change in settlement patterns is very low. This is because existing planning controls are designed to prevent intensive development in the study area. In addition, there is an opportunity to plan the township of Buangor to take advantage of the improved amenity and reduced traffic.

The social impact in relation to pressures on settlement patterns is expected to be Minor for both Option 1 and Option 2, because of the number of parcels affected and very low likelihood of adverse change in settlement patterns.

18.7.1.2 Distribution of residents

It is unlikely that any residents would specifically move away due to the project, apart from the residents of the dwellings that are proposed to be acquired (see Section 18.7.2.1 for property details).

However, it is considered that these households have strong local ties and are likely to stay in the general region. Therefore, while the Project could lead to a redistribution of some residents, it is likely to have a negligible effect on total population.

The social impact in relation to distribution of residents is expected to be Minor for both Option 1 and Option 2.

18.7.1.3 Changes to demographic characteristics

Changes to demographic characteristics are anticipated to be small and consequently have a minor social impact. This is due to the planning controls that will limit development and hence demographic change. Prior population patterns can be used to conclude that any new people who move to the area are likely to have similar socio-economic characteristics as the existing population. It is also noted that some people may benefit if new properties become available in the area for rural residential purposes.

The social impact in relation to changes to demographic characteristics is therefore expected to be insignificant for both Option 1 and Option 2.

18.7.2 Individual and community impacts

18.7.2.1 Dislocation of individuals

The following dwellings are proposed to be acquired under each option:

- Option 1:
 - Property ID 1317
 - Property ID 1438
- Option 2
 - Property ID 1317
 - Property ID 1316
 - Property ID 1498

Therefore a maximum of three dwellings are proposed to be acquired as a result of the Project.

Four of these dwellings listed above are owner-occupied and one is rented. This is a low social impact compared with other similar transport infrastructure upgrade projects.

The reason that one of the dwellings (currently rented) is to be acquired under Option 1 is because the landowner preferred that particular alignment, as it has a lower property severance effect on their property than Option 2. This indicates that the landowner has chosen the trade-off between a higher impact on the dwelling against a lower impact on the productive capacity of the farm.

One dwelling which is to be acquired under Option 2 only is owned by a family who have indicated that they would prefer to have their property acquired rather than live close to the realigned Western Highway. They have indicated a preference to

relocate rather than remain in a location which they feel would be considerably changed for the worse by the realignment of the Western Highway.

The social impact is expected to be minor for both Option 1 and Option 2.

18.7.2.2 Access

There is expected to be some localised impacts on travel times for landowners, particularly the owners with property on both sides of the Western Highway who require the movement of farm machinery from one side to another. However, overall benefits for road safety and Western Highway operations would be provided for general users. It is anticipated that the majority of people affected would accept slightly longer travel distances as there would be a trade-off with:

- Reduced travel times due to the improved road conditions.
- Safer driving conditions.
- Safer access to and from side roads and properties.

Access to community facilities and focal points would not be adversely affected by the Project. Access to the community facilities in Buangor may be improved due to significantly reduced through-traffic in the town.

Any psychological severance impact would be minimal, as changes to existing access pathways are minimal.

It is also noted that due to significantly decreased traffic volumes through Buangor, it may become safer for children to walk or ride between dwellings in Buangor and community facilities such as the primary school and the sports facilities. This would be considered to be a social benefit, due to social health concerns regarding declining childhood activity levels.

The overall impact on access is considered to be Minor.

Road network impacts, including proposed intersections, are discussed in Chapter 9 (Traffic and Transport).

18.7.2.3 Amenity

Amenity effects of the Project may come from the following key elements:

- Changes to the road alignment or creation of service roads introducing transport infrastructure to new locations, or aligning it closer to houses than what is existing.
- Increased traffic noise, if it affects the quality of life for residents living adjacent to the Western Highway.
- Light from traffic at night, if the road is designed in such a way that lights shine directly on to dwellings.

- Changes to the pleasantness of a household's surroundings - for example, by road realignment, tree clearing or changes to the quality of the landscape.
- Changes to the air quality - for example an increase in vehicle emissions in locations currently without highway traffic.

Under both Option 1 and Option 2, it is estimated that there would be an increase in noise levels of 5dB(A) at four and three dwellings respectively. This is the level at which a change in noise would be 'clearly noticeable' at the receiver locations. Three dwellings may be eligible for noise mitigation as per VicRoads Traffic Noise Reduction Policy (2005). Refer to Section 3.2.2 of the Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Report (GHD, 2012g) for more information on this policy.

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment report (LVIA) states that there would be dwellings with an existing outlook to the Western Highway which may have their views changed due to vegetation clearance. The LVIA report details the landscaping options available to mitigate the impact.

The overall social impact on amenity is classified as Moderate impact, due to the large number of households that would experience a small change in their amenity due to one or a combination of the above factors.

18.7.3 Construction Impacts

The main disruptive effect of a major infrastructure project is often experienced at the construction phase by the local community. It is at this point that many of the negative access and amenity effects occur. The potential social impacts of construction include:

- Reduced amenity for adjacent residents from construction activities, including: increased traffic noise, dust, and visual impact
- Property access interruptions during construction
- The presence and movement of the construction workforce
- Location of facilities for the workforce, including site offices, amenities blocks and car parks.

The workforce directly employed on the project is estimated to be no more than 200, and is more likely to be between 50-100 people at any given time. The workforce is likely to include local people as well as people who are only in the area to work on the project. A proportion of the workforce is likely to move directly from construction of Section 1 to construction of Section 2, depending on project timing.

The level of disruption is likely to be high for an extended duration over the construction period. For this reason, the social impact of construction is assessed as a Moderate Impact. However, the impact is still temporary and is one that people

would be accustomed to, and it is expected that most community members would accept the nature of the impact, as they would understand that the construction will ultimately benefit their community.

18.7.4 Valued Places and Spaces

It is considered that the Project would have a positive social impact on the environs of the key community facilities in Buangor, due to improved amenity and access. The alignments avoid the Cobb and Co. Staging Stables and recreation reserve in Buangor. In addition, the alignments avoid the the Woodnaggerak homestead site.

Limited change is proposed to the Highway near Green Hill Lake. It is proposed to change the access arrangement to Green Hill Lake Road to a left in/left out only intersection. This means that there would be limited access impact or benefit from the Project at that location.

The enhanced access to Langi Ghiran State Park would need further consideration by Parks Victoria and the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE). Due to increased visibility and access there may be an increase in visitors to Langi

Ghiran State Park. If access is not managed properly this could be a negative impact.

There is some potential for social benefit in terms of improved access to these sites. The social impact of access to valued places and social foci is considered to be an Insignificant impact.

18.8 Risk Assessment

An environmental risk assessment was undertaken on the Project options to identify key environmental issues associated with the construction and operation of the Project. The methodology for this risk assessment has been described in Section 4.2 of the Social Impact Assessment (Technical Appendix O). A risk assessment report that explains the process in detail and contains the complete Project risk register has also been included in Technical Appendix Q.

Table 18-2 shows a summary for social impact of:

- The impact pathways identified
- A description of the consequence of the specified impacts

Table 18-2 Social Impact Risks

Risk No.	Impact Pathway	Consequence Description
S1	The Project may lead to changes to the existing social and community conditions by creating pressures for the settlement pattern to change.	There are two locations where dwellings are clustered: at Woodnaggerak and Buangor. The project is unlikely to affect any change on this settlement pattern, particularly since it mostly follows the existing alignment. However, it may encourage the long-term growth potential for Buangor. Currently it has very limited growth potential, but improving amenity and safety in the town by removing through-traffic may increase demand for properties in this locality. This possibility is off-set by planning scheme provisions which do not encourage increased residential development in the area.
S2	The Project may lead to changes to the existing social and community conditions by changing the distribution of residents in the vicinity of the Highway (Option 1).	The existing community is very low-density and mostly inhabits long-established dwellings. It is unlikely that any residents would specifically move away due to the Project, apart from the residents of two dwellings (Chainage (Ch.) 14500 and Ch. 24200) that would be acquired (Option 1). The Project may influence future decisions on locations of dwellings, however this is unlikely to have an adverse outcome.
S3	The Project may lead to changes to the existing social and community conditions by changing the distribution of residents in the vicinity of the Highway (Option 2).	The existing community is very low-density and mostly inhabits long-established dwellings. It is unlikely that any residents would specifically move away due to the Project. The Project may influence future decisions on locations of dwellings, however this is unlikely to have an adverse outcome.
S4	The Project may change the existing social and community conditions by creating change processes which affect the demographic characteristics of the study area.	The Project could lead to increased demand for properties from people seeking a rural lifestyle, due to decreased travel times from major centres. If this led to population change it would change the demographic characteristics of the community. Based on planning policies to protect agricultural land for farming, this would be seen as an undesirable change.
S5	The Project and changes to access arrangements may lead to changes to the existing social and community conditions by changing patterns of community interaction and use of social foci.	The main location for community interaction in the Project area is Buangor. Social foci include the sports ground, Cobb and Co building and the primary school. These facilities serve the surrounding rural community as well as Buangor. It is unlikely that either option for the Project in this locality would have a negative impact on access to, and use of, these facilities. It is more likely that removing through traffic through the town would be seen as a social benefit from the Project.

Risk No.	Impact Pathway	Consequence Description
		Woodnaggerak Homestead is seen as an important locality amongst the local community: there used to be a primary school, church and other community facilities in that locality. While these facilities are now gone, Woodnaggerak is still seen as important to the identity of the local community. Any negative impact on this locality may be seen as a negative outcome by the local community.
S6	The Project may affect local residents and communities during the construction stage.	Reduced amenity for adjacent residents from construction activities, including: increased traffic noise, visual impact, and property access interruptions during construction. There are several locations in the Project study area where this may occur. The sites of highest sensitivity are Woodnaggerak and Buangor.
S7	The Project may lead to effects on places with particular cultural, recreational or aesthetic values, particularly with regard to significant regional locations.	<p>There are three locations in Section 2 which have cultural value: the Major Mitchell historical marker, the Woodnaggerak Homestead and the Cobb and Co. building in Buangor.</p> <p>Of these, the two sites which face some risk are the Major Mitchell marker (see Appendix I) and the Woodnaggerak Homestead. The recreation reserve in Buangor has recreational value.</p> <p>Both options would avoid the Cobb and Co building and the recreation reserve in Buangor. There is a slight risk that the amenity in that location may be affected by the changed noise environment. However, it is more likely that the community would perceive the reduction of traffic on the existing highway as being of benefit, and the two effects would counter-balance each other.</p>
S8	The Project may create a risk of dislocation for individuals and communities.	<p>Two dwellings are proposed to be acquired and demolished in Option 1 (Property ID 1317 (Ch. 14500) and Property ID 1438 (Ch. 24200)) and three dwellings are proposed to be acquired and demolished in Option 2 (Property ID 1316 (Ch. 19200), Property ID 1317 (Ch. 14500), Property ID 1498 (Ch. 24200)).</p> <p>Some other properties risk being severed to a size that is smaller than 40 hectares, which would mean the owners may not obtain a planning approval to build a house. This risk links back to S1 and the risk of change to settlement patterns.</p>
S9	The Project may create a risk of severance and accessibility changes for individuals and communities	<p>Most existing access ways would be changed by the Project, particularly in the areas where the highway is upgraded to Freeway standard. Existing access points on to the highway would be removed. Some side roads may have restricted access and egress. In Buangor, the existing highway would become reclassified to a local road. Longer distances would be required to access some properties from the new road.</p> <p>Access to community facilities and focal points would not be adversely affected by the Project. Any psychological severance would depend on the changes to local connectivity, which are expected to be minor and could be improvements.</p>
S10	The Project may create risks of reduction of amenity (in relation to visual amenity, noise and other changes to the character of the area) to individuals and communities.	One dwelling at Ch. 10700 would have a new service road close to the front of the dwelling.
S11	The Project may create risks of reduction of amenity (in relation to visual amenity, noise and other changes to the character of the area) to individuals and communities.	<p>One house would be relatively close to the new freeway and access ramps (on Buangor-Ben Nevis Road at Ch. 19100). This would be a significant negative impact for the owners of this dwelling, especially as the Project would be constructed on a high embankment, which would block views and leave the residents feeling isolated from the rest of Buangor.</p> <p>One dwelling at Hillside Extension Road (Ch. 24500) would be 'islanded' by the new road. This would be a significantly negative outcome, especially since the roads would all be built up around the house. This may leave the residents feeling 'surrounded' and isolated.</p>

18.9 Environmental Management Measures

VicRoads has a standard set of environmental management measures which are typically incorporated into its construction contracts for road works and bridge works. These measures have been used as the starting point for the assessment of construction related risks and are described in detail in Chapter 21 (Environmental Management Framework). In some instances, additional Project specific environmental management measures have been recommended to reduce risks.

Management measures specific to each identified social risk, and the residual risk rating after these environmental management measures have been applied, are outlined in Table 18-3 and in Chapter 21 (Environmental Management Framework).

Table 18-3 Social Environmental Management Measures and Residual Risks

Risk No.	Environmental management measures	Residual risk
S1	No specific management measures are proposed as this risk is managed through the local planning scheme.	Negligible
S2	As per S1	Low
S3	As per S1	Low
S4	As per S1	Negligible
S5	Consultation with Council and the local community has been undertaken during the planning for this project to determine access requirements.	Negligible
S6	As per Air Quality, Geology (Contamination), Noise, and Traffic controls described in Risks A1, G2, G5, N3, T1. Protocols would be developed as part of the CEMP for liaising with adjacent land owners, to keep them fully informed about construction activities in their area, and any potential disruption to their access and amenity.	Medium
S7	The project is being designed to minimise impact at the Woodnaggerak homestead site. The alignments avoid the Major Mitchell historical marker and the Cobb and Co building.	Negligible
S8	Property acquisition would be managed in accordance with the <i>Land Acquisition and Compensation Act</i> . Where properties are severed to an unworkable size, VicRoads would work with landowners and Council to determine appropriate solutions.	Medium
S9	Service roads are required for a Freeway Standard road and have been included in the project developed for initial assessment in the EES to maintain all property access. VicRoads would liaise with landholders regarding access arrangements for driveways and access points. Access to Buangor would be maintained.	Low
S10	Amenity risks would be minimised through detailed design. Acquisition of properties may also be considered where appropriate	Medium
S11	As per risk S10.	Low

18.9.1 Residual Risks

Following implementation of the recommended mitigation measures, there are not expected to be any significant impacts, with three social risks rated as medium and the remainder rated as either low or negligible.

18.10 Conclusion

The Social Impact Assessment (refer Technical Appendix O) recommends a number of actions to respond to potential impacts at both the individual landowner and wider community level, including further community engagement through the detailed design and construction phases. A summary of the conclusions of the Social Impact Assessment is provided below in

Table 18-4.

There are strong social linkages within communities in the study area, with most residents having lived at the same address for more than five years. The study area also has several places of local and regional social value, including historic buildings and State parks and forests. However, the effect of the Project upon social value is likely to be low. There are not likely to be any significant consequences from the Project with respect to: settlement patterns; the distribution of residents; demographic characteristics; patterns of community interaction; or places of cultural, recreational or aesthetic value. There may be a reduction in amenity during construction and operation resulting in a medium impact upon some residents, although the amenity

and safety of Buangor would be improved by removing through-traffic. In addition, there is a medium impact in terms of dislocation and disruption to access for some residents, as two dwellings under Option 1 and three dwellings under Option 2 would be acquired and demolished. Also, some other properties would risk being severed to a

size smaller than what is required to build a house without a planning permit. Overall, it is considered that both Options 1 and 2 would have a low social impact when compared with other similar transport infrastructure upgrade projects.

Table 18-4 Summary of Social Impact Assessment

EES Objective	Indicator	Impact Assessment
Existing social and community conditions	Pressures on settlement patterns	Minor Impact
	Changes to the distribution of residents	Minor Impact
	Changes to the demographic characteristics of the study area	Insignificant Impact
Individual and community impacts	Dislocation for individuals and communities	Minor Impact
	Severance and accessibility changes for individuals and communities	Minor Impact
	Amenity impacts to individuals and communities	Moderate Impact
Construction stage impacts	Amenity impacts to individuals and communities	Moderate Impact
	Disruption to access	Moderate Impact
Valued places and spaces	Patterns of community interaction and use of social foci	Insignificant Impact
	Effects on valued places	Insignificant Impact



Ballarat – Ararat Railway line